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ABSTRACT

The ten essays that comprise this anthology concerning the people of Connecticut were written by high school students in Connecticut for the First Ethnic Studies Competition held in 1979-1980. The aim of the competition was to increase awareness of cultural pluralism in the state, to encourage multicultural education, to improve intergroup understanding among citizens, and to expand the available multicultural resources about similarities and differences in Connecticut ethnicity. Twenty five manuscripts were entered in the competition in three categories: oral histories, local histories, and photographic studies. These entries were judged on the basis of six criteria: general appearance, the accuracy of their contents, the insights that they provide into life experiences, their format and development, the depth of cross-cultural understanding that was demonstrated, and the choice of the sources employed. Winning essays included in the anthology are: "Natividade Cunha -- A Luso-American in New Haven, Connecticut;" "A Struggle for Identity -- A Case Study of Ukrainians;" "A Journey to a New Life;" "Bob Mikulka of Branford, Connecticut;" "Polonia in New Britain;" "Mae Yimoyines of Hartford, Connecticut;" "Jennie Mary Manzi -- Immigrant from Italy;" "Katharina Wendler Beauvais -- The Life Story of a Hungarian-American;" "Fred Olsen -- Roots from Norway and England in Guilford, Connecticut;" and "The Italian-Americans of Waterbury, Connecticut." (RM)

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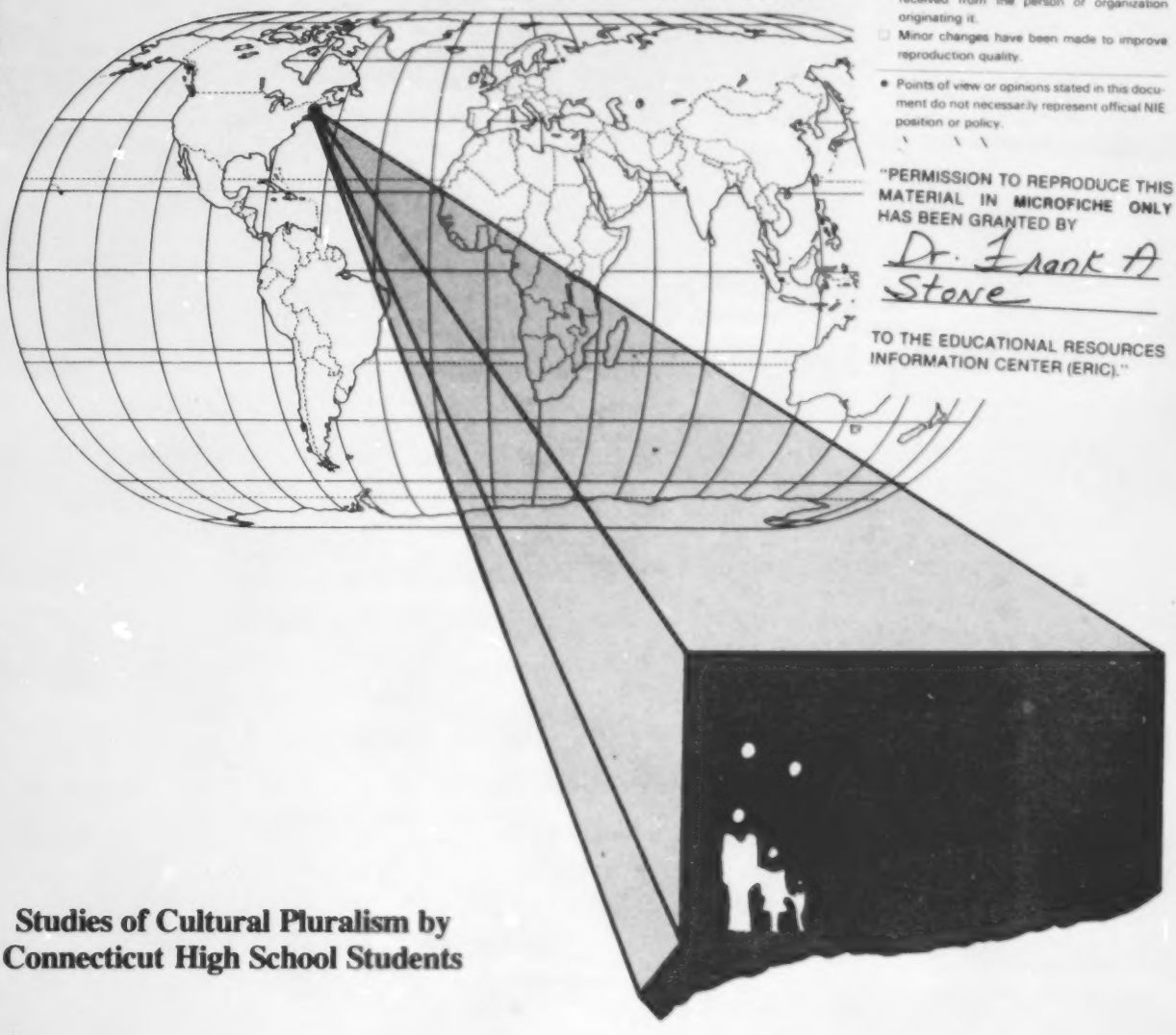
THE PEOPLES OF CONNECTICUT



Studies of Cultural Pluralism by Connecticut High School Students

Frank Andrews Stone, Editor

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The I.N. Thut World Education Center
School of Education
The University of Connecticut
Storrs, Connecticut

1981

This anthology is part of "The Peoples of Connecticut" Multicultural Ethnic Heritage Studies Series issued by the I.N. Thut World Education Center.

Frank Andrews Stone, Director
Patricia Snyder Weibust, Associate Director

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The Jews: Their Origins, In America, In Connecticut, 1976

The Puerto Ricans: On The Island, On The Mainland, In Connecticut, 1976

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The Poles: In Their Homeland, In America, In Connecticut, 1980

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Storrs, Connecticut

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In memory of

LOUIS C. ADDAZIO

1927 1980

An outstanding Connecticut social studies educator who received his Ph.D. degree from The University of Connecticut and was Professor of History at Central Connecticut State College, New Britain.

DEATH OF A TEACHER

Dedicated to Dr. Louis C. Addazio

A *loving* one is dead.
Yes, loving though indeed
loved.
A teacher
    one who shared his lore
    in torrents, waterfalls
    of caring
is now stilled.
Gone,
    no longer to arouse,
    to flood, inspire
    by his present self.
Yet
    in each mind touched
    remains a prism-like reflection
    a rainbow capturing the part,
the whole.
Vital, living, vibrant
he remains
(though just beyond our ken)
as teacher, and loving friend.

Colleen A. Kelly
July 14, 1980

FOREWORD

The ten essays that comprise this anthology concerning "Connecticut People" were all prepared by high school students in our state for the First Ethnic Studies Competition held in 1979-1980. Organized and funded by the I.N. Thut World Education Center for Bilingual, Multicultural, International and Global Education at the School of Education, The University of Connecticut; this program was held in recognition of the United Nations' International Year of the Child. It was jointly sponsored by the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies and the World Education Fellowship, Connecticut Chapter. The cooperation of the Connecticut State Department of Education in making this program possible is gratefully acknowledged. The competition was approved by the Connecticut Council of Secondary Schools.

The aim of the competition was to serve four purposes.

(1) To increase awareness of cultural pluralism in the State of Connecticut.

(2) To encourage multicultural education, global learning and ethnic expression among Connecticut high school students.

(3) To improve intergroup understanding among the citizens of Connecticut who have different ethnic backgrounds.

(4) To expand the available multicultural information and resources about similarities and differences in Connecticut ethnicity.

Twenty-five manuscripts were entered in the First Ethnic Studies Competition in three categories: oral histories, local histories, and photographic studies. These entries were judged on the basis of six criteria: general appearance, the accuracy of their contents, the insights that they provide into life experiences, their format and development, the depth of cross-cultural understanding that was demonstrated, and the choice of the sources employed.

The entries were evaluated by a panel of seven educators:

Dr. Peter J. Harder, Avon High School, Avon, Ct.

Mrs. Elizabeth Intagliata, Glastonbury Public Schools, Glastonbury, Ct.

Mr. David E. O'Connor, The Edwin O. Smith School, Storrs, Ct.

Mrs. Mary Phelps, Windham High School, Willimantic, Ct.

Dr. Arthur E. Soderlind, Connecticut State Department of Education, Hartford

Dr. Frank A Stone, The University of Connecticut, Storrs, Ct.

Dr. Thomas P. Weinland, The University of Connecticut, Storrs, Ct.

First prizes were won by Timothy C. Duffy, and Brenda Sikand and Karen Schultz. The second prize winners were Linda Knox and Richard Pignone. Third prizes were awarded to Ruth Kozloski and Timothy Mack. Although they did not win prizes, the entries of four other students were assessed worthy of inclusion in this anthology; making a total of ten articles.

The purpose of issuing this publication is two-fold. First, it is intended to provide recognition for a group of high school students who devoted time and effort to carrying out demanding ethnic studies projects. Second, their work can be viewed as models for other multicultural education programs to use in preparing

young people to work in this exciting field. In connection with "The Peoples of Connecticut" Ethnic Studies Series that is being used in many Connecticut schools, we hope that the products of these students will stimulate greater participation in exploring appreciating and preserving the rich cultural pluralism of Connecticut people.

Storrs, Connecticut
July, 1980

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An Oral History: "Katharina Wendler Beauvais — The Life Story of a Hungarian-American" by Renee Beauvais

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NATIVIDADE CUNHA:
A LUSO-AMERICANA IN NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

by Timothy Charles Duffy

Preface

This project was done in cooperation with Natividade Cunha, a sophomore at Lee High School in New Haven, Connecticut. Its completion would not have been possible without the cheerful involvement of Natividade and her family. Credit is also due to Ms. Kay Hill, Bilingual Resource Specialist at Lee High School, who introduced me to Natividade.

Natividade Cunha, an intelligent, pretty high school student is one of more than six thousand Luso-Americanos who have immigrated to Connecticut from Portugal in the past decade. Natividade, known as "Nati" to her American friends, came to New Haven, Connecticut in 1974 at the age of ten with her parents, Jaime and Maria, and her brothers, Luis and Manuel, from the small village of Castelões in the province of Tras-os-montes (across the mountains) in northern Portugal. Castelões is a small farming community of about a hundred families. The Cunhas speak longingly of the beautiful area of Portugal near the mountainous Spanish border where the air and country is fresh and clean and the flowers so beautiful.

Although Natividade's family owned and loved their land, life was difficult. Nati, her mother and small brothers worked hard to eke out a meager living, growing a garden and raising chickens, pigs and rabbits for food. Work was scarce for Mr. Cunha. He didn't like farming just to have enough to eat and live, which was the only kind of life and work possible in Castelões. He was forced to seek work in France and later in Germany as a construction worker, sending back money to support his family. Natividade's parents, wanting the best for their children, and urged by Jaime Cunha's parents who were already in Connecticut, came to America with the dream of a land of milk and honey.

Natividade and her family came to New Haven sponsored by her previously immigrated relatives. They stayed at their grandparents' house for one month before finding an apartment of their own in the heart of the inner city. Proud, strong, ambitious and hard working; both Mr. and Mrs. Cunha found jobs at Henry Richards, a pocketbook factory in New Haven. Mr. Cunha was laid off for six months, creating hard times for the family. Jaime Cunha then acquired a landscaping job in Stratford which he still maintains. Mrs. Cunha changed jobs and now works at Matlaw's, a sea food processing plant near her home. Her days are long as she works an eight-hour shift and then comes home to her traditional roles as housewife and mother.

Because of their frugality, the Cunha's have saved enough money in five years to buy a car, and just recently, their own house. They were still able to return to Portugal for a month one summer two years ago.

A visit to the Cunha home reveals the warm hospitality of the Portuguese. The visitor is offered homemade wine, delicious homemade sausage called *farinhotas*, and a sweet confection of fried dough called *sonhos*. A kind of ham

called *presunto*, is also offered, along with good Portuguese *pao*, which is a hearty Portuguese bread, and cheeses. The warmth and friendliness of the home breaks through the language barrier.

The Portuguese maintain the integrity of their culture even though living in an alien, inner city environment. Their social life is contained within the family, church and the extended family of the local Portuguese community. The whole community worships together at a special Portuguese Mass that is celebrated by Padre Albano who comes from Our Lady of Fatima Church in Hartford weekly. He is a good friend of everyone in the Portuguese community and after the service the families and friends gather together with him in one of their homes to eat and socialize.

The Portuguese gather frequently at Portuguese-American clubs in the New Haven area for lively dining and dancing. A recent dinner dance at the Wallingford Portuguese-American Club showed the Portuguese to be a happy, uninhibited, and fun-loving people. Young and old danced together to the music of a Portuguese band. They dined on *bacalhao* and many other of their native dishes, with Portuguese wine.

Natividade Cunha is unusual within the New Haven Portuguese community in that she has learned to speak English well and has contacts outside of the Portuguese people. As a result, she spends a lot of time translating for non-English speaking friends of her family at the market, the hospital, the telephone company and other places. This activity has done a lot to help her to become more a part of the general community in New Haven than are most of her family and friends.

Natividade's two brothers, Manuel, aged twelve, and Luis, who is fourteen, have had a more difficult adjustment to America, particularly at school. Both were first placed in Spanish bilingual classes and remained there for two years before they got into English classes. Both of the boys say that they want to go back to Portugal. They miss the country life and work there.

Natividade intends to go to college. Her parents do not especially urge her to do so, but they encourage her to do what she wants. It is common in the New Haven Portuguese community for parents to emphasize working rather than obtaining more education with their children. Nati believes that her parents will return to Portugal when she is educated and married, having given her the opportunity to get ahead for which they came to this country.

When Natividade arrived in America, she was very surprised with the new country because she had pictured it in her mind as some place that was "beautiful like heaven." She has found it to be different than she expected, but likes it and still sees America as the land of opportunity. Here she is exposed to higher and more available forms of education. She can work for higher pay, and have a chance not only to be a farmer, but instead maybe to become a lawyer. Nati misses her homeland but realizes that America offers her much more than Portugal. She is devoted to her family and rooted in her culture. Her parents long to go back to their homeland, but to Natividade, America is now home.

Natividade Cunha

This is the Cunha family, Mr. Jaime Cunha, Mrs. Maria Cunha, Manuel, Luis and Natividade. The Cunhas immigrated from Portugal in 1974. They now live in their own three-family house on Putnam Street, New Haven, Connecticut.

In the back yard of their recently purchased three-family house in the inner city of New Haven, the Cunhas cultivate grapes and grow a garden in an attempt to recreate a bit of their village life in Portugal.

Jaime Cunha makes his own wine from the grapes cultivated in his back yard.

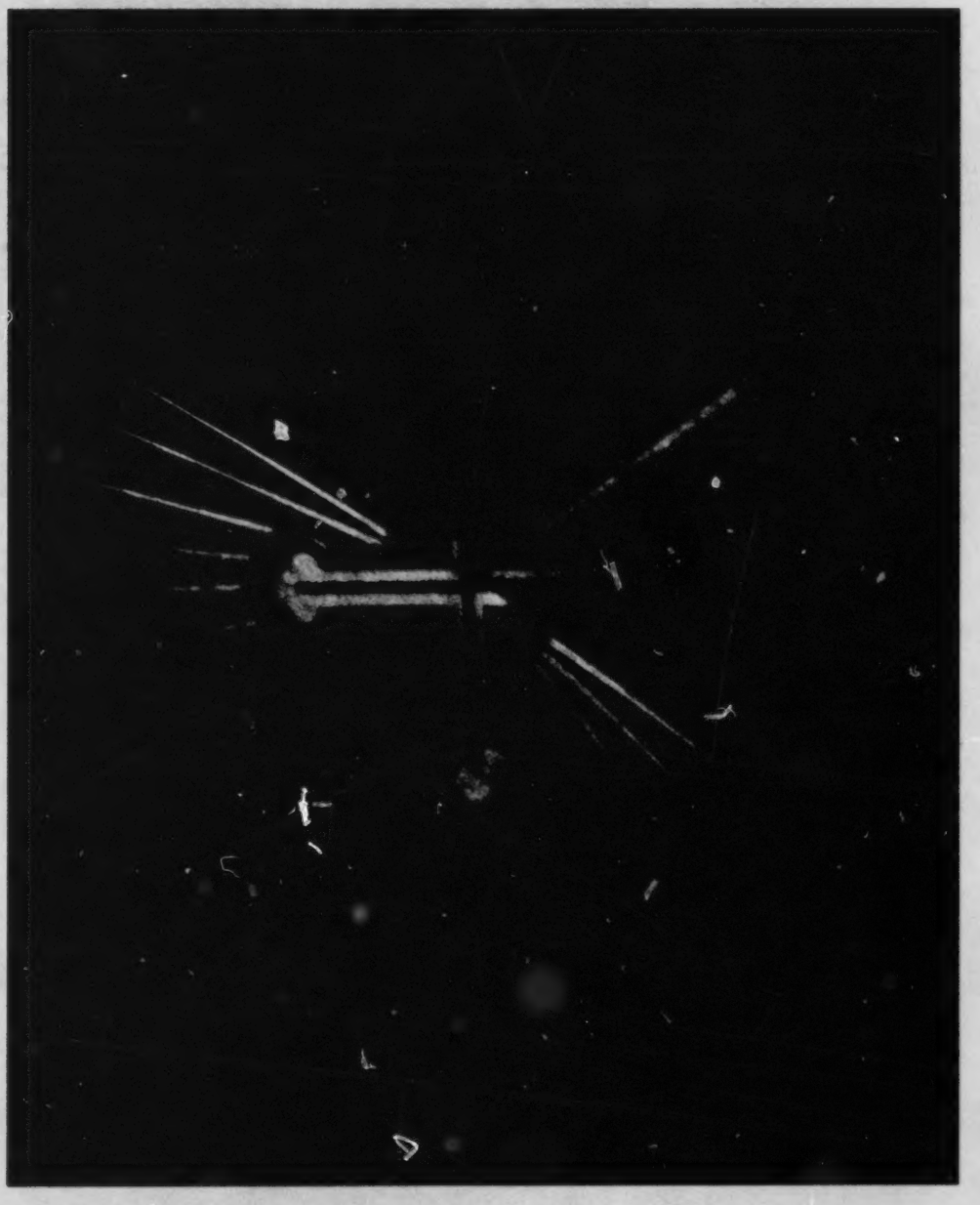
The family maintains a Portuguese tradition of making sausage called *farinhotas*. Here Manuel carries the sausage into the back yard shed in which it will be hung from the ceiling and smoked.

Here the sausage hangs from the roof of the shed where it will be smoked for eight hours in order to dry it.

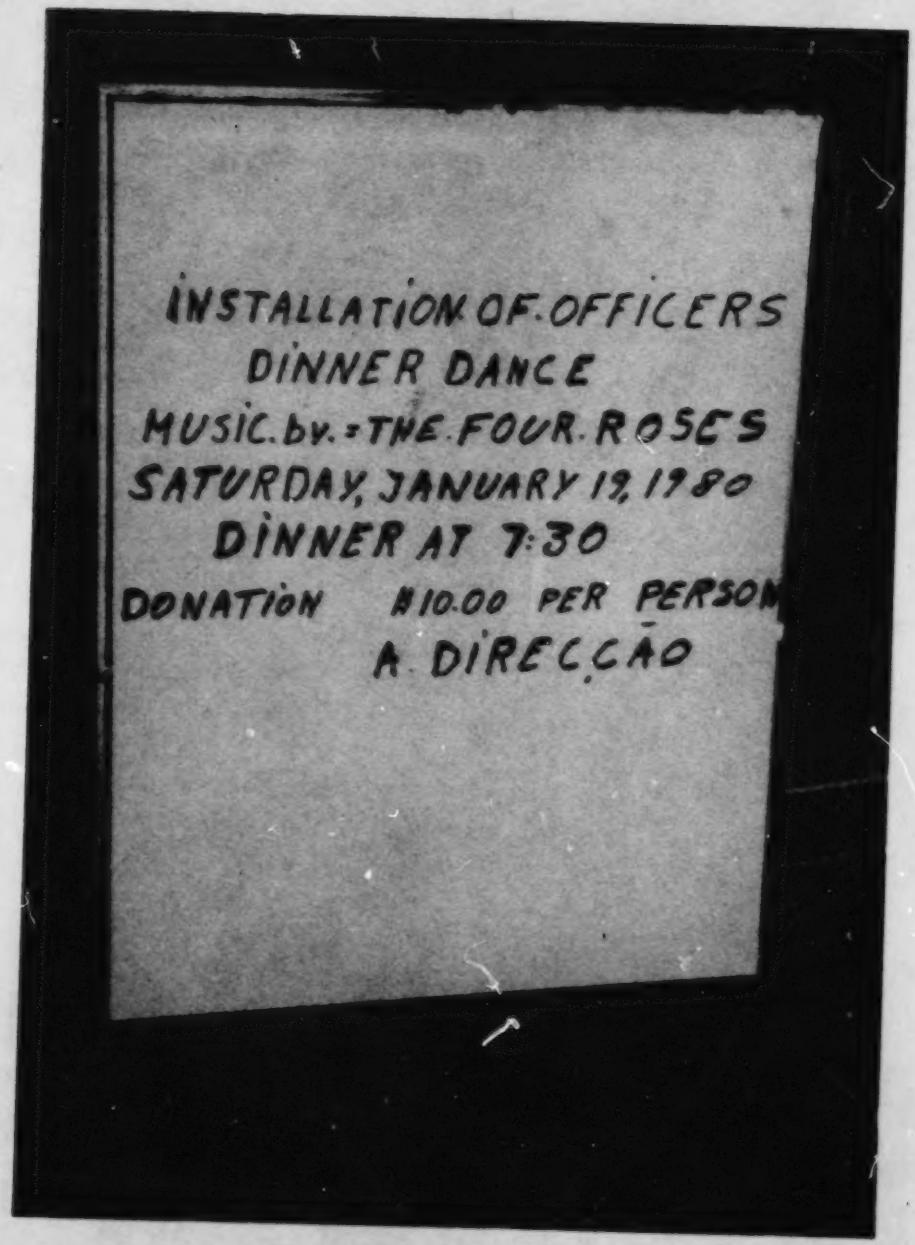
In the Portuguese community in New Haven several families will buy a truck load of potatoes which they share and store in their basements to last for many months. This is not only economical but reminiscent of life in the villages of Portugal.

Soccer is a favorite sport among the Portuguese. Natividade's brothers, Luis and Manuel, and cousins, Paul and José, dream of playing professional soccer.

The Cunha family is Roman Catholic. Padre Albano comes to New Haven from Hartford each Sunday afternoon to conduct Mass in Portuguese. After church, he dines with a Portuguese family in the neighborhood and other families come and visit with him there.



This cross appears in a window of Sacred Heart in the Hill section of New Haven where the Cunha family attends church.



The Cunhas' social life is confined to the Portuguese ethnic group. Dinners and dances at Portuguese clubs are frequent. All ages within the family group have fun together. They are a happy people.

The Portuguese banquet is a merry occasion. Often the main dish is *bacalhao* (fish) and Portuguese wine. Dancing continues late into the night.

Natividade relaxes with her parents at a party. While still close to her family and the Portuguese culture, she is, much more quickly than any other members of her family, adapting to the American way of life.

Kay Hill (left), a New Haven bilingual resource teacher, who recently learned Portuguese in a Yale University summer program, has been a great help to Natividade's academic progress. Also, she has been included in the Cunhas' social life.

Julio Lamos sips *caldoverde* (soup) while carrying out his duties at a dinner dance in the Wallingford Portuguese Club. He is a friend of the Cunha family, director of the Wallingford Portuguese Club and correspondent to the East Coast Portuguese newspaper, *Luso-Americano,* founded in 1928.

Manuel Pinto has been a friend of the Cunhas since they arrived in New Haven. He has assisted the Cunhas with their applications for United States citizenship as well as assisting them in making travel arrangements for the family's return to Portugal for a visit.

Natividade was ten years old when she came to the United States. Her knowledge of reading and writing in her native Portuguese aided in her acquisition of basic skills in English. The New Haven Public Schools ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Program was also of great benefit to Natividade. Natividade is very intelligent and highly motivated. She is interpreter and intermediary for family and friends whose adaptations to the language and American ways of life are more limited.

At Lee High School in New Haven, Natividade is exposed to many different fields of knowledge. She is presently taking a biology course and is interested in languages. She speaks French, Spanish and English as well as her native Portuguese. Natividade has great ambition and hopes to become a lawyer.

After school Natividade has a part-time job in a kitchen in Tower I, an elderly housing complex in New Haven. She works hard and saves her money in order to go to college.

While still longing for her native Portugal, Natividade is well acclimated to her new culture. Although she has discovered that the streets of America are not paved with gold and that the air of the city is not so fresh and clean as her homeland, she has realized that America is still a land of opportunity. She wants to stay in America.

A STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY OF UKRAINIANS

by Brenda Sikand and Karen Schultz

Introduction

"Since we came here for political reasons, most of us think that our place is there, in the Ukraine, not here." These strong feelings were voiced by Father Mamchur of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Hartford. It was natural for members of refugee ethnic groups to feel out of place in America, he explained, so they usually lived together in close-knit neighborhoods. There they could help each other adapt as well as recreate their old country in the new environment. Within this community, it was possible for them to maintain their ethnic heritage in future generations. But what happened when members left the neighborhood group? They then began to take on more of their new environment and slowly became acculturated. This is a problem that is beginning to influence the survival of the Ukrainian communities in Connecticut. They are struggling to keep themselves together, but find that each generation is moving closer to integration into the dominant culture. This movement was well prophesied by Jean de Grevecoeur, "Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world." This new race of men may still say that they are part Ukrainian, but it will most likely be a term that describes their background rather than a way of life such as that experienced by the first generation of Ukrainian-Americans.

Why They Left the Land They Loved

The story of the Ukraine as a nation is a very complicated one. During the twentieth century the greatest struggle of the Ukrainian people has been for independence from the rule of the Soviet Union. They are a very proud and strong people, but they found themselves and their families in intolerable situations during World War II. Borys Bilokur, an immigrant to Connecticut from the Ukraine, reflected on those difficult times. He recalled that, "During the German occupation quite a few Ukrainian families and younger people were deported and taken to work in Germany. My family — I have an older brother and sister — they were the ones who were forceably removed, and my parents and I actually followed them. It was quite frightening because there was much deprivation; very little food and no shelter." Many Ukrainians faced deportation. Father Mamchur, another Ukrainian immigrant, told of a similar experience. "I was taken to Germany when the war happened between Germany and Russia. The Ukraine was occupied by the Germans and they sent in their people to fight. All foreigners, from every country that they occupied, they brought to Germany to work and I was one of them."

Some Ukrainians met with other unyielding forces. Irene Oliynyk, a member of the Ukrainian National Home in Willimantic, told about her family's immigration. "My father was in the Ukrainian army. They went to Poland and he was a prisoner there. Then he got contracted to go to France." Even the churches in the Ukraine suffered during the war. Father Feddish, pastor of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Willimantic, assessed the situation and concluded that, "Now in the Ukraine the church has been liquidated, especially the Catholics . . . All its

bishops were in prison and most of them died in prison as confessors and martyrs of the faith. Other people were exiled to prison camps in Siberia and God only knows where else in Asia."

After the war many Ukrainians continued living in Europe, but some of them immigrated to the United States, not wishing to return to the Ukraine under the present circumstances of Soviet occupation. Father Feddish knows many such people from among his congregation. "The Ukrainian people in Willimantic are special," he reports, "Most of them came here after the Second World War. They were deported to Germany. Others fled before the Communists came back into their country. They would not go back home, so some of them were in Italy, some were in England, and other families were in Belgium. They found work there and then started coming to the States." The war had caused them to fear staying in their homeland. Father Mamchur said, "We could not go back because if we went, in one way or another, we would have been destroyed by the Russians."

Communities

It was common for the Ukrainian immigrants to the United States to settle near large cities, particularly in Pennsylvania. This is where the Bilokurs immigrated and first settled. "We were brought over by a church. We were sponsored by a religious group in Philadelphia and first lived in that city." There the new Ukrainian Americans worked, usually in factories. "The people settled — quite a few of them in Pennsylvania, along the lines of the northeast anthracite region or around Pittsburgh where they worked in the steel mills," Father Mamchur informed us.

As do most immigrants after coming to a foreign land as refugees, the Ukrainians stayed together in ethnic neighborhoods. Dr. Bilokur described these communities. "We lived in a Ukrainian ghetto. In the larger cities each ethnic group has their own ghetto, almost to the exclusion of everyone else, because the first immigrants always come into the existing group with the help of the residents of that group." Learning to speak English was one of the first problems that Borys and the other Ukrainians encountered. "My father and I went to work in the same place so we were helping each other and the language barrier that had existed before became minimal." Many Ukrainians began to move into New England, some settling in Connecticut. "Those who came to Willimantic," Father Mamchur relates, "all tried to get jobs at the American Thread factory. They didn't have to speak much English, or know the language. At that time there was no Ukrainian community here to speak of . . . no Ukrainian organizations. There came about two hundred families. At first they had services at St. Joseph's Church, I believe. Then they bought a lot and built their own church. After that they built the Ukrainian National Home. They bought some land, a couple of acres, for picnic grounds and they paid everything off."

According to Father Feddish, the Ukrainians in Connecticut have made good lives for themselves because they are willing to work hard. "Some of their children went to schools and graduated from colleges and universities, and are working. Practically all of them have their own homes." They also created organizations to help preserve their national heritage for future generations. Feddish continues, "They have what they call a native school and there the children are taught to read and write in Ukrainian, learn some Ukrainian literature, Ukrainian geography, and the history of the Ukraine."

Religion

Two church bodies in the United States have been built by Ukrainians: the Ukrainian Catholic Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. When Ukrainians first began to come to the United States, they had no religious institutions of their own and had to worship in other churches, but did not find this arrangement adequate. Father Feddish explained. "They are very conservative people and they're attached to their own traditions. They wanted to have priests who spoke to them in their own language, so that spurred on church building programs." The role of the church, although somewhat altered here, plays a large part in maintaining the identity of Ukrainians in both their homeland and in the United States. Father Mamchur recalled what the role of the church had been in the Ukraine. "Our church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, played a very big political role . . . We have been occupied by Russian for a long time and because of the church we were able to keep our identity as Ukrainians, nationally and politically. We knew who we were, what we were living for and what we were struggling for because in the church we could somehow, some way learn, speak and talk about things that we couldn't in other places became it was forbidden."

Now in the United States the Ukrainian-Americans are still trying to preserve their ethnic heritage. Father Mamchur continued by telling us that, "The importance of the church in the United States is that it keeps us together so that we do not lose our nationality or language for anything." Father Feddish agreed with this thought, "I would say that the church is the most important factor in preserving the ethnic character of the people. Ukrainians are very religious by nature. The first thing they built was a church; not a school, not their homes. They always wanted a church. The church then became the religious and social center from which they developed other organizations — all centered around the church.

Most Ukrainian-American communities have a multitude of such organizations. Anna Sadiwskjy, president of the Ukrainian Club at The University of Connecticut, participated in many of them as a youth. "I belonged to a Ukrainian dancing group, and a Ukrainian American Youth organization. I also studied at a Ukrainian National school and everything else that went on in the community, I went to."

Some people feel that the strong religious devotion that had been maintained in the Ukraine has tapered off here in the United States. Reflecting on the situation, Father Mamchur said, "There is a big change. People in my country when I was there were much more religious than they are here, now." Such a change in behavior can be harmful for the preservation of the Ukrainian heritage. Father Mamchur continued, "The church, for Ukrainians, is the soul of the nation. If anyone loses the church, they believe, they are losing everything."

The Future

The Ukrainian-Americans not only fear losing the church, but they are also concerned about their ethnic identity that it maintains and represents. Conditions in today's American society have caused many Ukrainian young people to become acculturated and drift away from any acknowledgement of their Ukrainian heritage. This causes some Ukrainian Americans to view the future of their ethnic group with despair. Father Mamchur comments on the outlook. "The future does

not look good to me because most of the younger generation in our community just forget about everything — they forget about going to church, they just don't think about being together. Leisure and pleasure are all they know." Irene Oliynyk felt much the same way. She said, "Some youngsters will still be active, but not as much as the older people. I'm sure that they will not be willing to spend so much time and effort because young people today are involved with many other activities." As these informants perceive the situation, then, it seems to be primarily the older Ukrainian-Americans who have the strong desire to preserve their identity.

Many Ukrainian-Americans, however, believe that it is important for youths to maintain their ethnicity. Various cultural programs and schools have been developed for the children as well as adults. There is a Ukrainian school in Hartford run by the Ukrainian Catholic Church. This institution offers programs for studying the Ukrainian culture. The National Home in Willimantic also provides many services to Ukrainian-Americans. Irene Oliynyk describes them, saying, "It is a place for social gatherings. They have a bar, and there is a Ukrainian school for the children. Their social and national life is centered here."

Despite the fact that these organizations exist with the hope of teaching and preserving the Ukrainian culture and traditions, the common feeling among many Ukrainians is that their special identity will be lost after the older generation dies out. Father Feddish feels that the problem goes deeper than that. He says that, "The main problem is that there isn't enough work for the young people in Willimantic. They go to school and get into some career or profession. When they finish college, they look for jobs in Willimantic. When they can't find work here, they move on. The old-timers will stay on forever, though."

The number of members in Ukrainian parishes and clubs is rapidly decreasing. As a result, fewer activities can be offered. Father Mamchur, for example, reported that, "We did have teaching organizations in our parish, but we don't any more because our community is very small. We have ninety-four members — not families — members. Almost half of those members are widows or widowers and actually just retired people."

Another contributing factor to the pessimistic outlook for the future of Ukrainian-Americans is the fact that they are able to keep only loose ties with their old country, the Ukraine, because of the Soviet rule there. Many still have relatives living in the Ukraine and correspond with them occasionally. A select few have the opportunity to visit. Even then, their visitation rights are very strict. Father Feddish declared, "It is difficult to keep up ties because the family over there is persecuted for having ties with the United States. Some of our people have made trips back there as American citizens, but they aren't allowed to go into their native villages. The family must travel to a nearby town for the visit. Then their time together only lasts about three hours. If mother and father are sick, it's too bad."

As most Ukrainian-Americans look to the future they can see very little prospect for maintaining a distinct ethnicity. It is a sad and distressing reality that a variety of problems have arisen. Father Mamchur sadly stated that, "I see only problems here. There are no prospects because when the older people die this community (in Willimantic) will somehow in one way or another disappear. It will not come about in the next few years, but it will happen eventually."

Conclusion

"Follow us to a new life, follow us in our struggle against the old order, in the work for a new norm of life, for the beauty and freedom of life."

Maxim Gorky

It was with a similar outlook to the ideal expressed by Gorky that many Ukrainians journeyed to America. In many cases they had been forced to leave the land that they loved because it was under the rule of the Soviet Union. Father Mamchur explained, "We are here as political refugees. We originally came here for political reasons." When they arrived in America most Ukrainians had nothing. They brought very little money, had no source of income, and few friends. They found themselves alone in a new land struggling to keep their cultural identity while simultaneously also trying to become a part of the new life around them. Their strong will and hard work helped them to overcome problems such as the language barrier and lack of appropriate skills. Eventually their hopes for a better life were realized. Through their ethnic communities and their religious institutions the Ukrainian immigrants found the support that they needed to survive in the new land. They stuck together and helped each other to adapt and adjust to their new environment.

The Ukrainian-Americans are still working to keep together in order to preserve their identity. Many of them believe that it is important that their ethnic heritage be preserved and maintained. This has been difficult for them to achieve because of the rapid integration that takes place in American society. Also, there has been a loss of contact with the Ukrainian past. Although the prominence of Ukrainians in Connecticut is declining somewhat, one cannot forget that they are still a strong group composed of contributing members of our society. They have much to offer to and share with Americans of other backgrounds. It is through understanding their past experiences and hardships that insights can be gained regarding them and the American character of which they are now part.

Informants

Bilokur, Dr. Borys, Storrs, Conn. on February 13, 1980, interviewed by Brenda Sikard and Karen Schultz*.

Feddish, The Rev. Basil, Pastor of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, Willimantic, Conn. on February 12, 1980.

Mamchur, the Rev. D., Pastor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Hartford, Conn. on February 27, 1980.

Oliynyk, Irene at the Ukrainian Home in Willimantic, Conn. on March 3, 1980.

Sadiwskyj, Anna, President of the Ukrainian Club at The University of Connecticut, Storrs, Conn. on March 6, 1980.

*All of the interviews were conducted by the same two investigators.

JOURNEY TO A NEW LIFE

by Phuong Hoang

I have come to realize that in recent years many Vietnamese have immigrated to the United States. Some of these people came to America some safe way. But there are many other unfortunate people who got to this country by taking unpleasant and dangerous journeys. One of these people is my uncle.

My uncle's name is Truong Hoang. He is thirty-two years old and his occupation is a doctor. He practiced his work in the South Vietnamese Army during the recent war, which later on put him in a dangerous position. His life was filled with the happiness of serving others until one day in April, 1975.

During that year the Communist government of North Vietnam wanted to gain more power and control all of the people. Their ambitions were fulfilled when they invaded South Vietnam. The new government was so harsh and cruel that the citizens of Vietnam wanted to escape from it as soon as possible. Unfortunately for my uncle, however, he was captured and imprisoned. There, the Communist regime did not provide enough food for the prisoner's needs. He and the other people in the jail had to discover different kinds of nutrition in order to survive. Their main food consisted of rats, roaches and insects. The days dragged on with my uncle working for long hours with little sleep and no wages. He was finally freed from the prison after six months of torture. It was his occupation as a physician that rescued him from confinement. He was released because the Communists needed doctors to help care for their sick citizens. So my uncle was not killed.

Realizing that he had an opportunity now to escape from Vietnam, Truong looked for his chance. The only method of escaping was to bribe your way out. Instead of paying with money, however, my uncle used gold. The amount of gold that he had to pay in order to escape was about twelve ounces. The people that he would give the gold to were fishermen and the Communist guards who had formed a human smuggling operation as a means of survival. The profit from the gold would be shared equally between them. His journey had to be completely in secret because if the Communist government caught him, Truong Hoang would be killed immediately.

Truong's excursion from Vietnam was aboard a small crowded fishing boat, which was extremely uncomfortable. Food and water were scarce for the number of people on the boat. Children and adults often got seasick. Some of them eventually died of starvation or were drowned. After five days of this torture at sea, they arrived off the coast of Malaysia. As the boat loaded with Vietnamese refugees approached the Malaysian shore, however, it wasn't allowed to land. The Malaysian guards pushed the boat back out into the deep water, and forbade anyone to land on Malaysian soil. The reason for this was that the Malaysians did not want to accept any responsibility for the refugees. Therefore, it took them a full month at sea before they finally reached a location where they would be admitted to a refugee camp.

My uncle was then placed in a Malaysian camp at Pulau Bidong, until he could make arrangements to come to the United States. Life in the camp was much better than it had been on the boat at sea. The refugees were finally offered a place to sleep and given adequate food. Truong Hoang had to wait in Malaysia for five

months before he was able to emigrate to America. Then he boarded an American airliner for the flight to the New World, which was paid for by an American philanthropic organization. He would eventually have to pay back the costs of the trip when he had established himself in his new country.

On September 22, 1979 my uncle landed at Bradley International Airport in Connecticut. At first I didn't even recognize him, although he had lived with our family for ten years. He seemed to be very skinny and dark standing in the New England sunshine. It appeared that he had not been properly fed and had been frequently tortured. This made his arrival in the United States a doleful experience for my family. We all had to be extremely careful about what we said so that we wouldn't remind him of the tragic past. His experiences under the Communist government in Vietnam made us realize that we should try to help him adjust to the different American customs.

Truong Hoang has now been in Connecticut for more than three months. He is trying to rebuild his life once again. Every single day and night he studies hard in order to pass his medical examinations so that he can be a doctor in his new country. Even though he is happy here, he still feels deep sorrow for what has happened to his native land. Being from a different cultural background, his main difficulty in Connecticut has been adjusting to American customs and getting used to the cold winter weather here.

Having to be separated from his homeland has also affected my uncle's personal life. When he left Vietnam, he had to leave behind many of his close relatives. It is probable that he can never see them again. This was extremely painful for my uncle because he still misses these relatives, whom he loves very much. However, he now has our family to comfort him and help him through the rough times.

He says that he will never go back to Vietnam except to bring my grandmother and our other relatives to a free country. If a person doesn't want to return to his homeland, the government there must be exceptionally cruel. If one lives under that kind of regime for a long time, I suppose that they get so that they could accept any kind of conditions. They will also develop the ability to survive on almost any kind of food. This is the type of trauma that many Vietnamese in South Vietnam went through, and are still undergoing. It must end immediately. After all, every human being should have a chance to be free.

I personally believe that the United States has been a tremendous help in meeting the refugee problem. Americans participate in international organizations and church groups that sponsor the new immigrants. The American people have helped in many ways, but more help is needed. The American government should send more ships out to sea in order to rescue other homeless refugees. This task must be undertaken immediately because not only did my uncle suffer and almost lose his life, but there are now others who are in danger at this very moment. Statistics show that there are still millions of refugees in the world who have no homes. These exiles wish to enter the United States because it gives them what they desire most, freedom. And the best place in the world for them to obtain freedom is in America.

BOB MIKULKA OF BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT

by Linda S. Knox

Bob Mikulka's story began in 1930 in the western Czechoslovakian town of Tinava. He was the second to the youngest of thirteen children. The Mikulkas lived as farmers until the death of their mother at a very early age. A year later, when Bob was five years old, his father brought the family to the United States to start anew. They settled in a small town called Lansford located in the Panther Valley of Pennsylvania. They chose this town because a community of Slovak immigrants already lived there, making it possible for the Mikulkas to establish their new home as a part of a familiar society.

Lansford was strictly a mining town. Bob's father began working in the coal mines there at once. Bob remembers that in almost every home either a father or a son had been killed in the mines. Yet the families were dependent on mining for their incomes. The Mikulkas were a very poor family both in Czechoslovakia and in America. His father, however, earned what was then considered to be very good wages. He made $45 a week, which today would be equivalent to about $500. Yet with thirteen children to clothe and feed $45 did not go far enough.

All of the children were ready and willing to help in any way that they could. As soon as they were old enough, starting at the age of seven, they went out and looked for any available jobs. Bob worked in a bowling alley every night until midnight and made $5 a week. He said that the job wasn't too exciting, but it brought in some extra money and he picked up some tips here and there on the art of bowling. "With practice," he boasted, "I became pretty good." Money was always scarce, but once a year on Memorial Day, each child of the Mikulka family got ten cents to buy a soda and cracker jacks. This was a special day in Lansford with a parade that marched all through the town and ended up at Summit Hill Cemetery. Bob remembers it well.

There was never enough warm clothing to go around. When their shoes wore down and got holes in them, their father would nail a piece of cardboard inside. For encouragement he would always say, "Well, it's better than a hole, isn't it?" During the winter months none of the children had boots, so they had to go out in the snow wearing their shoes. When they got home they were punished for having gotten their shoes wet. To this day Bob cannot seem to understand how his father managed to keep his own shoes dry on wet, snowy days.

Besides the lack of clothing, there was also never enough food to eat. For breakfast, they had bread and tea. Lunch consisted of bread and soup. Dinner was often the same menu, or for a change there might be stew. They had one big meal a week which consisted of a dinner of meat and potatoes on Sunday. Bob described their Christmas Eve dinner, however, as "unforgettable." He said that the taste of the sauerkraut and prunes has remained with him for forty years.

Although they did not have much cash, surprisingly enough they did own the house that they lived in. They boys all slept up in its unheated attic, five to a bed. Bob smiled and recalled that there were constant fights to determine who would have to sleep in the middle of the bed each night. He explained that no one wanted to be in the middle, because you were slept on, kicked, and in the summer, smothered by heat. As the youngest boy, Bob was often forced to sleep in the middle of

the bed. The girls in the Mikulka family had a bedroom of their own, where they slept three in each bed. There was no bathroom in the house, only a toilet in the cellar. For their Saturday night bath (they only bathed once a week) a big tub was filled with hot water. First the girls took their baths, and then the older girls had to bathe the smaller boys.

There was another way to get clean, however. The boys all collected coal every day after school in order to heat the house. Bob and his brothers loved to go to the mines at the end of each work day. There they would mingle with the men. If they were lucky, they could get into the company showers along with the miners who were finishing their shift.

The Mikulkas were an immigrant family and thus strict discipline was considered to be in order. Their father strongly believed that the only way to keep his children in line was by hitting them. The end result of this approach was that they were all afraid of their father. One time, Bob with two of his brothers, John and Paul, ran across a street. John was hit by a passing car and immediately taken off to the hospital. Bob remembers clearly the terror he felt of going home. He was afraid to confront his father with the news of what had happened, and even more afraid of the consequences of not doing so. So instead of going home right away, Bob and Paul went to the movies. The hospital contacted their father and informed him that John had a broken leg. So of course Bob and Paul had merely postponed the inevitable because when they got home, their father was waiting, twice as angry because they hadn't immediately reported the accident to him.

When the Mikulkas came over from Czechoslovakia they didn't know a word of English. Yet their father forbade them speaking anything but English, causing a gap among the members of the family according to their age. The youngest seemed to catch on to the new tongue quickly most of the time. The older Mikulkas had more difficulty with it. The end result was that often no one would say anything at home; it simply wasn't worth the trouble.

The Mikulka family belonged to the Slovak Catholic Church which they attended every day, and twice on Sundays. The children all attended the Slovak Catholic School taught by Slovak nuns. Discipline there was the same as at home — very strict. The punishment for misbehaviour was being hit with a ruler on the knuckles of both hands. Today, Bob is far from what one might describe as a "religious person." He strongly feels that the religious surroundings that were forced on him during his childhood were sufficient to last him for the rest of his life.

When Bob was twelve, in 1942, his father died. By this time, one of Bob's older sisters, Kitty Mikulka Pavlick was married. She moved out of her newly established home in New York and came back to the small town of Lansford in order to keep the family together, as she had promised their father as he was dying. However, Bob, now an orphan, became too much for his sister and her young husband to cope with. He was the youngest boy and very restless. At least once a week, he would run away from home to go to New York City with his shoeshine kit. He recalled that he used to hide on the train. Once the tickets had been collected, he considered himself to be safe from detection. He was often caught without a ticket. This never stopped him from running away, however, and he was often able to get a free ride. Kitty and her husband, Francie, soon became familiar

Bob Mikulka in 1944 at age fourteen

Bob's father, Michael Joseph Mikulka, in the uniform of the Austrian army.

with Bob's routine. Each time Bob left home Francie always managed to find him and bring him back to Pennsylvania. Looking back on this stage of his life, Bob laughed and said that he'll never forget the time that he and Francie were on their way back home from one of these excursions. They were in the Pennsylvania Railroad Station, and Francie went to buy a newspaper, leaving Bob alone. Bob said, "I just couldn't resist," and he jumped on another train back to New York.

Finally, Bob was sent to an orphanage. This institution was run by monks. The punishment for any infractions of the rules was being beaten with a belt. Here again, Bob wasn't fed well. Bob remembers that one time he got very sick with ptomaine poisoning. There were no doctors, so one of the monks gave him two aspirin tablets and put him to bed. There was a tower at the orphanage where no one was allowed to go. When Bob wanted to be alone, however, he often climbed up into the tower. When he was caught, he was severely punished. Bob was kept at the orphanage for one year, as had been arranged. He was then of high school age. So he was sent back home and put into the local public high school.

In 1947 at the age of seventeen, Bob had become very tired of his restricted home life, so he ran away to join the army. This was the first time in his life that he was really exposed to the world. At this time he was five feet five inches tall and weighed one hundred ten pounds. For the first time, Bob was fed well. As a result, he was constantly outgrowing his uniform. He shot up about eight inches and gained fifty-five pounds in a matter of about ten months.

Bob became a radio operator in the army, which interested him greatly. He was sent to the Marshall Islands in the South Pacific and was later transferred to a base near the city of Burlington, Vermont. There, Bob became a sergeant. He remembers that one night he went out drinking with a private whom he knew from back home. The private got drunk, so Bob called a taxi for him. The private said repeatedly that he didn't have any money to pay for the taxi. Bob told him again and again that he had put five dollars in his pocket, making sure that the taxi driver overhead also. It ended up with the private getting a free ride home because Bob really hadn't put any money in his pocket.

Bob was given an honorable discharge from the army due to a mastoid operation that left him deaf in one ear. He was now out of uniform without any idea in the world where to go or what to do. He figured that the first thing to do was to get a job. He had heard by word of mouth that there were jobs available working on the piers. So he went down to Gulfport, Mississippi and began unloading ships for a dollar a hour. He said that each day the men lined up for work. Those who worked the hardest were chosen and stayed on the job. The other men were sent home. It didn't take Bob long to realize that he couldn't work on the docks for the rest of his life. It was hard work and he was eager to get more out of life.

At the age of twenty, in 1950, Bob determined to set himself straight. Education now became his main objective. He figured that he couldn't go wrong with an education. He applied for admission and was accepted into Hines Junior College in Raymond, Mississippi. He graduated from this institution and received his high school diploma in 1955. He then went on to college, attending the University of Louisiana until 1960. There he received a degree in engineering with high honors.

After graduation Bob pulled together all of the resources that he had gained in the past years and set out to use them. His first engineering job was building a

The Mikulka children in 1958. From left to right, bottom row: Anna, Bertha, Julie, Kitty. Middle row: Mary, Helen, Marge, Toni. Top Row: Steve, Mike, John, Paul, Bob.

water tank in Okay, Arkansas. He then worked for a cement company and designed a liquified petroleum truck which is still in use today. Engineering jobs took him all over the country to Colorado, New Mexico, Texas and many other states. As he got more experienced and became better known, Bob found himself in New York. He built several buildings in New York City, with many more to come.

One of the construction companies with which he was connected expanded and began to build in Connecticut. Bob followed. In New Hartford, he constructed a Waring Blender factory. Bob grew to love Connecticut, so he left the company that he had been working for and moved to Branford, becoming a freelance construction engineer. In this capacity, he was the engineer and superintendent of construction for the Armstrong and Gant Shirt buildings, both located in the Longwharf area of New Haven.

For the first time in his life, Bob made a permanent home for himself. His usual determination gave him insight. He built a fourteen-room home in the quaint town of Guilford, Connecticut for his wife and family. Today, Bob owns his own successful construction company. With leisure time, Bob has picked up many hobbies. His favorite is boating. He finds adventure and excitement in single handedly manning his forty-foot sailboat.

The Mikulkas were one of the millions of families that immigrated to the United States in the early 1900's. They came to a new land, not knowing the language and encountered new customs and a different life style. From their original home in Czechoslovakia they settled in Lansford, Pennsylvania. The Slovak community in this small town was the closest that they could get to their own people and former way of life. Their father's determination to succeed and pride in accomplishment was instilled in all the children. While they were living in Lansford, the Mikulkas didn't realize that they were poor. The outside world was largely a mystery to them, so they didn't know what more there was to life than what they then possessed. In a sense, they were secluded and held captive in that Pennsylvania valley. Bob kept trying to break out of the confines of this situation. He wanted to learn about the American way of life and tried to find out how to become a successful person. He sought opportunities for an education. Eventually, he learned the ropes and ladders to prosperity. Although he is proud of his Slovak heritage, Bob soon became very much an American — eager, ambitious, and with the drive to achieve his goals.

POLONIA IN NEW BRITAIN

by Ruth Kozlowski

The Polish community in New Britain, Connecticut has evolved from a poor immigrant society to become important, both economically and politically. New Britain's citizens of Polish descent now hold positions in the courts and city government. Some have established businesses and become employers.

The purpose of this paper is to tell the Polish immigrants' story which starts with the first migration to the United States in 1706. It includes the story of the influx of Poles into New Britain and the influence of the Polish Roman Catholic Church there. In particular, the impact of the leader of the New Britain Polish community for sixty-five years, Father Lucyan Bojnowski, will be discussed.

Since the eighteenth century native Poles have traveled across the Atlantic Ocean to settle in the United States for a variety of reasons. This immigration started at the first English settlement in Jamestown, Virginia. A handful of Poles located about a mile from Jamestown and built a glass furnace there. The first American-manufactured products sold in England were produced in this Polish glass factory. When he spoke about the laziness of many of the English colonists, Captain John Smith remarked, "they (the colonists) never did know what a day's work was except the Dutchmen and the Poles."[1]

The small number of Polish immigrants to America during this period was due to several reasons. The population of Poland was not expanding and therefore the need for emigration did not exist. Secondly, the men and women who were most likely to have undertaken the hardships of coming to the New World were preoccupied fighting wars against the Cossacks, Russians, Swedes and Turks. One reason that many immigrants were eventually drawn to the United States was to obtain political and religious freedom. During this early period of immigration between 1608 and 1776, however, the Poles didn't face persecution in their native country and therefore were not forced to leave their homeland.

When sections of Poland were simultaneously occupied by Austria, Germany and Russia in the nineteenth century, emigration for political reasons increased, although it never reached mass proportions. Many exiled Poles, hoping that an uprising to restore the independence of their homeland was imminent, preferred to wait in a country closer to Poland than the United States. According to the census figures, for example, the total number of Poles in Connecticut in 1860 was seventy-three. Ten years later, in 1870, that number had increased by only ten people.[2]

Economic reasons began to draw Poles to America in the late nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries when job opportunities for unskilled laborers were much greater here than in Poland. The majority of the Polish immigrants who came to America between 1870 and 1914 were unskilled laborers, farm workers and domestic help. More than ninety percent of these new immigrants settled in the northeastern and middle western states; especially in the cities of Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and Milwaukee. Large Polonias also were formed by these immigrants in smaller New England cities in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.[3] These Polish immigrants, being one of the last ethnic groups to arrive in America, had to take the lowest jobs in the factories, mills and mines.

One of the northeastern cities where many Poles settled was New Britain, Connecticut, a natural location for them to come to. Factories such as the Stanley Works and P. F. Corbin made New Britain a major manufacturing center of hardware, machinery and appliances which attracted the Polish workers.[4] John and Gabrielle Traceski in 1878 and Tomasz Ostrowski in 1880 were among the first Polish immigrants who settled in New Britain. By the year 1900, there were 1,169 Poles among the total population of New Britain of 28,202. A decade later, the population of New Britain had almost doubled, reaching 43,966 of whom 18,051 were classified as foreign born inhabitants.[7] Many of them must have been Polish because in 1930 the Polish population of New Britain was 16,290. This was almost twenty-four percent of the 68,128 residents of the city at that time.[8]

Their life in America was certainly much different than the peasant existence of most of these immigrants in Poland. Natives of Poland were described in an article published in the *New Britain Herald* on September 12, 1895 by Miss Ella Hobart, a missionary who had travelled to Poland in order to study the language, as being a "clannish people, and many of them are not able to read and write."[9] The immigrants left their tight-knit families and rural villages to come to the cities of the United States for work.

The Mutual Aid Society of Saint Michael the Archangel was formed by the New Britain Poles as early as 1889 in order to help them make the transition to their new lives and assist in forming a Polish language parish. This new parish church, like the churches of Poland, would serve them as a community center, assure the security of the local Polish community, and also serve as it's chief organizational instrument. The social structure of the immigrant Polish community in New Britain and elsewhere was based on four aspects of life. These were the Polish language parish, which was most important, the parochial school, fraternal insurance organizations, and the Polish newspaper.

The Poles living in New Britain wanted to form a Polish language Roman Catholic Church, feeling uncomfortable in the Irish and German churches where unknown languages were spoken. These immigrants also wanted to participate in governing their own church, which was impossible in churches where different ethnic backgrounds predominated. Despite having difficulties in receiving permission from the Bishop of Hartford to establish a Polish parish in New Britain, an ecclesiastical society named St. Casmir, the Prince, was formed in 1894. The name was changed to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Roman Catholic Church of New Britain two years later.

The fact was that the leaders of the Hartford Diocese were not eager to have a new parish started by the New Britain Poles. One member of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the United States, Cardinal McClosky, voiced a common opinion when he said, "A pig sty is an adequate church for the Poles."[10] The permission to form a new parish was granted only after the Poles threatened to start an independent church. The Polish National Catholic Church begun by the Reverend Francis Hodur in 1904, and represented in New Britain by the Church of the Transfiguration, which is still firmly established, was a direct result of the continued stalling on the part of the Roman Catholic leadership to grant permission for a Polish language parish.

After being established the Polish parish played a large part in the Polish immigrant's life. "Religion (to the Polish peasant) was an emotion, not an intel-

lectual experience."[11] The priest who was pastor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church for sixty-five years, the Right Reverend Monsignor Lucyan Bojnowski, is considered by many to be the person who did the most for the Polish population of New Britain. Dr. Daniel Buczek in his book entitled, *Immigrant Pastor,* showed his admiration for Bojnowski by asserting that this person's work was instrumental in establishing New Britain as a leader among the Polish American communities.

Born on February 5, 1868 in the village of Świerzbutowo in the county of Sokólka, state of Grodno, Poland, Lucyan was the son of very strict parents. Since his father owned land, the Bojnowski family was part of the "szlachta" or petty nobility. Lucyan and his brothers and sisters were brought up to believe that it was their responsibility to help the peasants and other people who were not as fortunate as themselves.

Lucyan came to the United States in 1888 and first worked on a peach farm in Glastonbury, Connecticut. He saved his money until he had enough to attend the Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius, a Polish Catholic institution in Detroit, Michigan. Although illness prevented him from completing his studies there, Lucyan later continued his education for the priesthood at St. John's Seminary, Brighton, Massachusetts.

Father Lucyan Bojnowski arrived in New Britain on September 10, 1895 as the pastor of the newly organized Sacred Heart of Jesus parish. During the previous two years the New Britain Poles had been served by Father Tomasz Misicki, the priest of the Polish parish in Meriden, who came over to New Britain to say mass every Sunday. The years from 1895 to 1957, when he retired, have been called the "Bojnowski Era" due to the great influence that Father Bojnowski exercised on New Britain Polonia.[12] When he came to New Britain there were barely five hundred Polish immigrants scattered all over the city. Thirty-five years later, in 1925, his parish had grown to 9,885 members.[13]

Father Bojnowski organized the New Britain Polish community by using his dynamic personality and strict code of moral behavior. He kept the Poles from drinking, playing cards or shooting dice. He protested the organization of Saturday night dances, which he believed led to brawls. He also worked hard to prevent divorce, thefts, or the unsuitable upbringing of children among his constituency.[14] Bojnowski's many achievements include the construction of the large stone church that is still in use today. It was built in 1904 on Broad Street, New Britain. He also organized the Daughters of the Immaculate Conception in the same year, and established a weekly Polish language newspaper, *Prezewodnik Katolicki* (The Catholic Leader), in 1907. The parish school was formed in 1910, and a Polish cemetery established in 1912. An orphanage, Bojnowski's greatest personal satisfaction, was opened in 1923; followed by a home for the Polish aged in 1925. All of these institutions were directly linked to Father Bojnowski's efforts.

The spiritual needs of his people were not the only aspect of their lives in which Father Bojnowski took part. One of Bojnowski's admirers said this about him.

> *A severe person is that priest Bojnowski. He keeps a tight rein on his parishioners. He meddles, mixes into every property transaction, into the difficulties of every business establishment, into every loan contract. He stubbornly guards lest anyone through neglect should become a pauper. He spares not a penny for anything Polish.*[15]

Although Father Bojnowski had many followers and admirers, there were as many New Britain Polish-Americans who disagreed with his policies and what they regarded as his autocratic rule. They wanted to withdraw from the Sacred Heart parish to form a second Roman Catholic church under different leadership. All decisions at the Sacred Heart parish, whether major or minor ones, were made exclusively by Bojnowski, without consulting the members. His strict moral codes were also criticized as being exaggerated and excessive. The sexes were seated on opposite sides of the church, and women received communion after the men. Men and women, even married couples, were not allowed to dance together. Bojnowski often ejected women from church or wedding ceremonies if he found their clothing or hair styles objectionable. All weddings at the Sacred Heart parish were performed during the week because Father Bojnowski did not want to take a chance that a couple newly wed on Saturday might miss Sunday mass.

Mrs. Lucille Michaud recalls a childhood incident at the Sacred Heart parish school that demonstrates Bojnowski's strictness. As a child, Lucille had suffered from polio and the doctors advised her to wear snow pants in the cold weather when she went outside of school for recess. When Father Bojnowski came around the children, the nuns would hide Lucille. One day, however, Bojnowski found her and hit her with his cane. He maintained that, no matter what the reasons, girls should never wear pants.[16]

The strongest opposition to Father Bojnowski developed in 1924-25. The dissident parishioners of the Sacred Heart Church complained about their pastor's habit of making personal criticisms from the pulpit. They also objected to his advising his followers on how to vote in elections. On January 10, 1927 the people who were unhappy at Sacred Heart parish held a meeting for all Poles in New Britain interested in forming a new church. The meeting had been sparked by the firing of Police Commissioner Peter Pajewski. It was rumored that Father Bojnowski had used his influence to get Pajewski removed after his brother had been caught illegally selling liquor. Bojnowski, who was very law abiding, had taken it on himself to inform the Attorney General that Pajewski's drugstore was involved in liquor sales.[17]

A committee was selected during the January 10 meeting to request permission to establish a new parish from Bishop John H. Nilan of Hartford. The reasons included Bojnowski's pulpit mannerisms, his remarks in his newspaper, *The Catholic Leader*, that drove many people, especially the youth, away from their religion, and the quality of education being provided at the Sacred Heart School. Members of the committee claimed that the children of dissident parishioners who attended the school were being beaten. Besides these complaints, another reason for establishing a new parish was the growing Polish population of 18,800 who were living in New Britain at that time.

The concept of organizing a new parish wasn't a new idea. In fact, Father Bojnowski himself had even considered forming a new church that would be under his control. The break from the Sacred Heart Church, however, involved much name calling on both sides. There were two instances of arson; the burning of the old Sacred Heart School, and the burning of the office of *The Catholic Leader*. Father Bojnowski attacked the January meeting by calling it a "bolshevik gathering" and declaring its leaders to be "swindlers, liars and frauds," as well as

"inveterate drunkards."[19] Because Bishop Nilan hesitated to approve the plans for the new parish, the organizing committee met again on April 8 and voted to establish the Holy Cross Church. Bishop Nilan then agreed to approve this Polish-language parish as a Roman Catholic Church.

The establishment of the Holy Cross Church after 1927 certainly signified the dissatisfaction of some of the former Sacred Heart parishioners with their pastor. This was a problem concerning strong personalities, however, and not a rejection of the Catholic Church as a whole. To this day, the Holy Cross Church also provides the Polish-Americans of New Britain with opportunities for education, social life, and assistance for members who are in need; as well as spiritual guidance.

Although some of Father Bojnowski's tactics can be criticized, in retrospect it is clear that the Polish community of New Britain benefited from his leadership. During the seven years from 1913 to 1920, the membership of the Sacred Heart Church had increased by 40.53 percent. This made it the largest Polish parish in the United States at that time, including the churches in Buffalo, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee and New York.[20] It is no wonder that divisions appeared in such a large institution presided over by one man. Former New Britain Mayor, George M. Quigley spoke of Father Bojnowski as, "not just an individual, but one of the institutions of New Britain." His accomplishments and very presence made the relatively small and undistinguished industrial city of New Britain the unofficial 'capital' of New England's Polonia.[21]

Notes

[1]Miecislaus Haiman, *The Polish Past in America*. (Chicago: Polish Museum of America, 1975), p. 12.

[2]*Ibid.*, pp. 155, 157.

[3]Stanislaus A. Blejwas, *A Polish Community in Transition: The Origins and Evolution of Holy Cross Parish, New Britain, Connecticut*. (New Britain: Polish American Historical Association, 1978), p. 5.

[4]*Ibid.*

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 7.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 5.

[7]*Ibid.*

[8]*Ibid.*

[9]Daniel S. Buczek, *Immigrant Pastor*. (Waterbury, Conn.: Heminway Company, 1974), p. 1.

[10]Blejwas, *A Polish Community*, p. 8.

[11]Buczek, *Immigrant Pastor*, p. 3.

[12]*Ibid.*, p. 8.

[13]Blejwas, *A Polish Community*, p. 9.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 10.

[15]Buczek, *Immigrant Pastor*, p. 41.

[16]An interview by the author with Mrs. Lucille Michaud, who attended Sacred Heart Parish School and whose grandparents were immigrants from Poland.

[17]Blejwas, *A Polish Community*, pp. 22-3.

[18]*Ibid.*, p. 33.

[19]*Ibid.*, p. 27.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 18.

[21]Buczek, *Immigrant Pastor*, p. 95.

MAE YIMOYINES OF HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

by Richard M. Pignone

Mae Yimoyines is the mother of one child and the grandmother of two. She is now sixty-five years of age, hostessing at the Oakdale Tavern, and living comfortably with one of her younger sisters in Wethersfield, Connecticut.

Mae's story begins in Plomari, Greece on December 27, 1915. She was the third child and oldest daughter born to John and Sultana Yimoyines. When asked what it was like living in Greece recently, she replied without hesitation, "Beautiful." Mae recalled that both the land and its people were magnificent. Plomari is a village near Mytilene on the island of Lesbos in the Aegean Sea. The land had lush green rolling hills, surrounded by sparkling water. Usually overhead was bright sunshine and blue sky. The people of the island were very close, united as one. The main export of Plomari was olives. There were olive groves all over the countryside, belonging to individuals as well as to companies. The Yimoyines were one family that owned their own olive groves.

In Plomari, the Yimoyines had many relatives. Mae remembers most vividly her aunts and uncles; Straitis and Sophia Yimoyines, James and Aphrodite Kondoureles, and Maldra Yimoyines. Before the great depression struck, these and other relatives migrated to Africa to become merchants in the olive trade. Their moves furthered her family's olive industry because they took over all of the groves and maintained a steady export with their relatives in Africa.

Although there were ten children born to the Yimoyines family, Mae's twin sister died at an early age. The Yimoyines family flourished on Lesbos, with part of their prosperity coming from two department stores that they owned, as well as their olive business. They had servants who did the work in the fields, and about an hour each day was spent overseeing their work. In a society composed of high, middle and low classes, Mae placed her family in the upper class. They lived in a large multi-story house with five bedrooms. At that time the Yimoyines house was the largest dwelling around. Being the oldest daughter, Mae was only allowed to finish the third grade before dropping out of school. After her school days ended, she helped her mother with the household chores, and helped to keep an eye on the other children as they grew up.

The Yimoyines family, like all of their neighbors, belonged to the Greek Orthodox religion. On Lesbos they attended St. Nicholas Church. Mae didn't consider her family to be particularly religious, but like everyone else they went to church every Sunday and participated in all the religious holidays without exception. The one reason that Mae enjoyed going to church was in order to sing. She played a major part in the choir, and it was for this reason that Mae always considered going to church as more entertainment than a requirement. The other kids in the family, especially the impatient boys, disliked going and often feigned illness in order to stay home. But Mae remembers that this method usually failed.

Greece was struck hard by the depression in 1929. Being an American citizen himself, Mae's father, John, decided that Greece was no place for his family to stay during the depression. The family came to America in two groups. The parents, John and Sultana, the second oldest brother and three other children, six in

John Yimoyines in his mid-twenties in Greece.

all, were the first to immigrate to the United States from Lesbos. At the age of fifteen, Mae was left on the island in Greece with her oldest brother, George, who was seventeen, and three children, who were then two, four and six year old.

Being the oldest person still at home, George was expected to run the remaining department stores and also to try to keep the olive business going. He found that farming was difficult because of the lack of money to pay for irrigation and fertilizer. Mae was left to tend to the three younger kids. She recalled that at first their life was very hard, but hope was far from being lost. She knew that she too would follow shortly after her family had gotten settled in America. So until then, she set her mind to working, and even said that this period in her life was, "Not so bad." Shortly after the first family members had left, however, the depression got so severe that both of their stores were lost. This left Mae with no steady income with which to put food on the table. The little money that George had been able to save while running the stores was used up, along with everything that John had sent to them from America.

After thirteen months of her playing the role of mother, Mae's father was able to send over enough money to Greece for the remaining five children to come to the United States. They left behind their house and land, and having been American citizens at birth due to their father's citizenship, there were no complications during their journey. When they got off the boat in New York harbor, John was waiting for them and took them to their new home. The house was a one family, six room, cold water flat in Astoria, Long Island. The neighborhood was an ethnic mixture of Germans, Irish and Italians. Now there was one Greek family there, the Yimoyines. The people of the neighborhood lived in complete harmony, without any conflicts because of their background or past history.

When she arrived in America, Mae describes herself as being very happy because the whole family was back together again. It did not take her and the other four members of the "sub-family" that had stayed on in Greece long to get adjusted to the life style that everyone else had become accustomed to. George went right out and found a job as a cook in a restaurant. After having failed to find a job as a waitress, cashier or vendor, Mae located an opening as a maker of Turkish cigarettes. Mae was now sixteen years old. The factory where she worked she remembers as having had a pleasant atmosphere. Her daily shift was seven hours long and she was paid four dollars a week. All of her earnings, she turned over to her mother. Her father remained in the business of selling sandwiches, soda pop, candy and cigarettes. The third oldest son went to City College. He had completed high school in Greece, and the family decided that this was a good opportunity for him to receive an advanced education.

As the oldest daughter in the family, Mae was the first to marry. She met a Greek man named Straitis, whom his friends called Charles, at a church picnic. Straitis would later become Mae's husband. She describes her relationship with her parents as having been very close. When she married and moved away, leaving her roles as a "second mother" in the family, her parents had no hard feelings. The family bonds remained strong since her move was not one of a great distance away.

Eleven months after being married, Mae gave birth to her only child, Helen, in 1938. Straitis was a furrier — a worker for a fur coat company in New York.

The five members of the Yimoyines family left in Greece with relatives and friends, 1930. Mae is seated at far left holding youngest sister, Les; brother, George, standing in back at far left; sister, Evangeline, seated on lap of aunt, Aphrodite, in front of George; sister, Aphrodite, seated in white dress to far right, front row.

Mae Yimoyines, age 20.

They began their married life in a three room apartment on 107th Street in the city. Actually, Mae explained, her life was easier taking care of only her husband and one child, instead of the large family into which she had been born. She credited her home making skill to the fact that she was older now, and had had considerable experience in that field.

As Helen grew up, she was not spoiled. She was sent to a Greek school as well as to public school. Mae feels proud of her daughter because of the way she inherited her own strict set of morals, and developed her own interest in books and learning. Although only the Greek language was spoken at home, Helen quickly learned English in school and furthered her education. In fact, Helen later graduated from The University of Connecticut and went on to earn her Master's degree in elementary education.

When Mae got married, her husband's salary was more than enough for the family to live on. But as the fur industry slowed down due to the depression, her husband was laid off work. They decided to move to Hartford, Connecticut in 1951. With the money that they had saved over the past thirteen years, they were able to buy a large, nine room house in a nice residential area. It had a spacious backyard with apple trees. There were three large and elegant stained glass windows in this house. However, Charles (Straitis) still could not find a job in Hartford, so Mae went to work in a restaurant owned by two of her brothers, Andrew and Constantine, as a hostess and cashier.

Mae and Charles were divorced in 1959. She kept the house and he left Connecticut permanently. Mae was then left to support herself and Helen. The moral backing of her family, with whom she had continued to be on close terms, proved invaluable at this difficult time.

When Helen married in 1961, Mae's youngest sister, Les, and her mother came to Hartford to live with her. The two sisters worked, while their mother maintained the home. In 1972 Mae's mother broke her hip. Her brittle bones would not mend, but she was kept at home with the aid of a hired nurse. Unfortunately, illness and senility set in and by 1975 she had to be placed in a nursing home, where she died in 1978.

After these events, Mae sold her house in Hartford because she felt that it was now too big. Also, the old neighborhood was deteriorating. She and her sister moved to an apartment for a year, and they then bought a home in Wethersfield where they reside today. Mae is planning her first trip back to Greece this fall to visit the place of her birth, Plomari on the beautiful island of Lesbos. She believes that this trip will bring back many ties with the land of her birth, which she left so many years ago to become a citizen of the United States of America and, eventually, my grandmother.

JENNIE MARY MANZI — IMMIGRANT FROM ITALY

by Jennie Marie Ball

This oral history is about a wonderful lady, Jennie Mary Manzi, who is my grandmother. She is now seventy-seven years of age. My grandmother was born on November 21, 1903 and raised in a little town called Fondi in Italy. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. James DeVito, had nine children: four boys and five girls. Both parents had to work very hard to raise these children with plenty of food, adequate shelter and enough clothes to wear. Although their living conditions in Italy were very poor, Jennie remembers that her family always tried to make the best of what they had.

Her father, James, left Italy alone to go to the United States in 1911, when Jennie was only eight years old. He thought that by making this move he would earn more money in America. The increased income he planned to use to support his family in Italy. Because her father was away from home working in America and her mother was also working in Italy, Jennie had many chores to do that had to be accomplished daily.

Her daily routine was always the same. Jennie would go to school for only two or three hours a day and then come straight home in order to work for her mother. Some of her chores included washing her family's clothes in a nearby brook and helping her mother prepare all of the meals. Everyone in the family worked hard to make their lives happy and as comfortable as possible while their father was away from home.

Jennie's mother worked in the fields all day long, picking and crating oranges. This was a long, hard job. Her father had found a job as a gardener in America, doing there about what his work had previously been in Italy, but now he made more money in Beverly, Massachusetts.

In Italy, Jennie's life was very different from our lives in Connecticut today. She didn't own many different clothes. In fact, most of the time she had only one pair of shoes, which had to last a long time. Her family didn't have enough cash to be able to buy new shoes for the children very often. She never wore slacks as many women do today. In her Italian village Jennie always wore long, full dresses, with petticoats underneath. Since her family was so large, it was hard for her parents to provide the children with a variety of clothing. Besides, it was customary for children in Fondi to wear the traditional Italian garments.

Most of the people who lived in Fondi did not have many comforts. Every child in the town followed almost the same daily routine as Jennie did. They went to school for a few hours and then worked at chores for their parents at home. The children all dressed the same because their parents didn't have enough money to buy them different sets of clothing. Many of the clothes that they wore were handed down. The comforts of home in Fondi consisted of a rustic bathroom, shoes during wet or cold weather, warm clothing for the winter months, and plenty of fresh fruit in season.

The people of Fondi were generally extremely religious. Jennie and all the members of her family attended church every Sunday. They were and still are a loving Catholic family. They believe in God and also are sure that everyone's soul

eventually goes to heaven. Even in her late seventies, my grandmother continues to go to church every Sunday.

Jennie's mother received a letter from her husband in the year 1912. James requested that his wife bring all of the children and come by ship to America. Following this message from her husband, Jennie's mother decided that they would all go. So at the age of nine, Jennie had to move from her homeland to another country that would be strange and new for her.

The family boarded the boat for the New World not knowing what was ahead for them. It was thirty long, unbearable days before the ship finally docked in America. Jennie describes her passage to the United States as an extremely uncomfortable journey. All of the children in the DeVito family had to stay below the decks in the storage area. The seas were very rough most of the time, making the trip even more difficult. Jennie was seasick every day and wasn't able to eat anything while she was on the steamer.

After they finally arrived in America, Jennie and her brothers and sisters were sent to work. They had to enter a strange school where none of the teachers spoke Italian. Jennie was forced to learn to speak English on her own, because Italian was spoken at home and there was no special program for teaching the new language to foreign-born immigrant children. She was only nine years of age and much of her experience from Fondi didn't help her cope with her new life. Jennie was finding it difficult to live in America. At the age of fourteen, after barely five years of education in English, Jennie was forced to leave school. That was the extent of her formal education.

Jennie soon got her first job, working in a shoe factory. She made a dollar a day, and her wages were all given to her family to help support them. Later, Jennie wanted to earn more money, so she went to work in a laundry business. She worked every day and her daily wages were now a dollar and fifty cents. She had to put a lot of time and effort into her job.

At the age of twenty, Jennie was married on October 21, 1923. This marriage had previously been arranged in Italy and her husband, Orest Manzi, was a mason contractor. At the time of their wedding, Orest was thirty-three, thirteen years older than his bride. Together Orest and Jennie had and raised ten children: five boys and five girls. All of them Jennie remembers as being very loving and devoted children. The Manzi family never had many comforts or personal possessions of their own. However, they learned to have fun with what they had.

On Christmas Eve, December 24, 1950, Jennie's husband, Orest, died. He left her a widow with ten children to raise and take care of. Jennie willingly devoted her energies to raising her children, giving them gentle and loving guidance. Tragedy, however, struck the Manzis again. On October 7, 1956 Jennie's mother died of cancer. This loss left Jennie very bitter, but she recovered with her children's help. Then on August 7, 1961, Jennie's father became ill and died of a heart attack. Once again, she and the family had suffered a loss.

Jennie Manzi, this immigrant to the United States from Italy, in 1969 was honored as the "Mother of the Year" by the Chamber of Commerce and Mothers' Club of Beverly, Massachusetts. The letter that nominated Jennie for this honor

was written by a dear friend of hers, Mrs. John Kelleher, Jr. In her letter Mrs. Kelleher explained that,

> *One of the warmest feelings I have ever experienced is when I have seen her children, now grown men and women, greet their mother with a sweet and genuine affection which would make any mother envious.*

As her granddaughter, I believe that Jennie is truly an outstanding person and most deserving of this award of outstanding mother of the year.

Jennie's children have collectively presented her with thirty-two grandchildren. She can also be proud of eight great-grandchildren. I think that the selection of Jennie as "Mother of the Year" illustrates the success of her adjustment to America after leaving Italy. Jennie is truly a warm and special person.

Jennie Mary Manzi in 1980

KATHARINA WENDLER BEAUVAIS
THE LIFE STORY OF A HUNGARIAN-AMERICAN

by Renee Beauvais

Katharina Wendler Beauvais was born in Budäors, Hungary on December 27, 1933 to Franz and Katharina Kruck Wendler. Her parents lived in a large two-story house. They owned and operated a knitting business, selling the goods they produced to stores in Budapest, a nearby city.

As a small child, Katharina remembers many happy times until 1941. This was the year when Hungary was occupied by the Germans. After that she can recall three years when their town was constantly being bombed and often received artillery fire. She and her family had to spend much of their time crouching in underground bomb shelters. During the periods when they were out and in their homes or at school, each person had to fulfill assignments as listeners and lookouts. They took turns trying to spot airplanes and give warnings before the bombs start to fall.

Whenever a plane was spotted, a very shrill whistle would be sounded. The families who lived in the five homes located in her neighborhood were assigned to a specific shelter. When the warning sounded, all of the members of the families had to run to their shelter, to stay there until the whistle was heard again. The most horrifying part, Katharina remembers, was this mad dash into the shelter on a moment's notice. Many awful thoughts went through their minds at these times. As they ran, they prayed that a bomb wouldn't be dropped in the direction where they were going.

When the Russians occupied Hungary after the Germans had been driven out, times became even more difficult. Now food and medicine stopped being distributed and a curfew was imposed on the people of Budäors. During the heaviest period of bombing, they spent three months continuously underground huddled in the shelters. The people dug tunnels from one shelter to another. This way they could visit their neighbors and help each other, while still living underground. This contributed to keeping their sanity, which was being endangered by having to live so long in a dark and confined space. On one occasion the Russians entered one of the bomb shelters, and Katharina and her family felt lucky to escape with their lives.

Later in the Russian occupation, Katharina's family along with the other residents of Budäors were finally permitted to return to their own homes. They were not allowed to own anything, however, because under the military occupation, all goods and valuables were regarded as the property of the Russian Government.

Communal kitchens were established where Katharina and her family, along with all the other neighborhood residents, were assigned a specified time each day when they could get into line for their meal. That meal consisted of one bowl of soup and a piece of bread. This was all the food that they would receive for an entire day.

The Russians used propaganda and terror in an attempt to enlist the Hungarians to support their way of thinking. They would sometimes drop gifts of pens and dolls from planes for the Hungarian children. But many of these presents were

loaded with explosives. Katharina remembers seeing several school children who were personal friends of hers pick up these objects, which exploded. Many of her friends were hurt and several were killed.

When she was about twelve years old, Katharina remembers seeing the Russians march German prisoners of war through her town. The Russian victors were very brutal to their German prisoners, many of whom died on these long marches. Those men who did die were simply placed in piles along with the seriously wounded who couldn't march any more. Then the Russians poured gasoline over them and set them afire.

As long as they obeyed the Russian rules and carried out all of the orders given them, Russians allowed the Hungarian people to live in their own homes and go about their business. The farmers who harvested crops, however, were required to turn most of their produce over to the Russians, without payment.

In 1946 the Russians decreed that all Hungarians who had German roots were to leave the country. By this time, most of this group were happy to emigrate, even though going meant that they had to leave behind everything for which they had worked all of their lives. Although the Russians told these people that they were being repatriated to Germany, actually they were on their way to Siberia. They were loaded into railroad cattle cars, with fifty to seventy-five people in each one. Men, women and children were all crowded in together. The railroad car doors were then locked from the outside and people cooped up inside of them had nothing but potatoes to eat. Katharina and her family were among the people being treated this way, but a stroke of good fortune saved their lives. When the railroad cars containing them and the other people from their town rolled into Vienna, Austria, the Americans who controlled that country interrupted the trains. They took off all of the people who were being deported.

Everyone was given a physical examination, deloused, and then placed in a camp for displaced persons. After spending some time in these camps, they were again placed in trains, this time by the Americans. The conditions were more humane and they were not travelling in cattle cars. Their destinations were various places in Germany. After being brought to Germany, Katharina and her family again lived in another displaced persons camp until some work could be found for them. Katharina's father, Franz, secured a job working in the fields that belonged to a German baron. After laboring this way for a few years, Franz was able to find an apartment for his family. He got better employment with the municipal highway department of a German town named Bad Rappenau.

Katharina went to school in Germany, attending both the grammar school and gymnasium, which is equivalent to a United States high school. After being graduated from the gymnasium, she went on to an advanced school in Heilbronn, Germany to study secretarial work. This preparation led to her obtaining employment at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, where she worked in the cancer research department as a medical secretary.

This job proved to be too dull for Katharina, however, and she got another one as the governess for the children of an American Army officer who was in Germany gathering intelligence about Russian activities. While in the employ of this family she travelled throughout Belgium, Holland, France, the Swiss Alps and Austria.

Katharina Wendler met Corporal Albert H. Beauvais in 1956. Corporal Beauvais was also serving with the U.S. Army Military Intelligence. They met on a blind date and in less than a year had applied to the U.S. Armed Forces, Europe, which were then the occupation troops in Germany, for a marriage permit. It took several months for their application to be processed. At last Katharina was certified as not being a communist, or a spy for some foreign power. The process was complicated by the fact that the Russians, who were still occupying Hungary, were not on good terms with the Germans. They therefore refused access to all Katharina's vital records such as her birth certificate, residence documents and any certificate proving that Katharina had previously been a citizen of Hungary.

Once the final approval from the U.S. Armed Forces was received, Katharina and Albert had just thirty-six hours in which to get married, or they would have had to start the whole process all over again. They were quickly married by the Burgermeister of Vaihingen, Germany, in a civil ceremony held in the Town Hall on November 8, 1956. But as their religious persuasion required that they be wed by a priest of the Roman Catholic faith, an application was then made to the interdenominational church at the Seventh Army Headquarters, Patch Barracks, Vaihingen, Germany. Here they were married in a religious ceremony on January 21, 1957.

After Albert's tour of duty in Germany was over, and even though they had been thoroughly screened and married by both civil and ecclesiastical law, Katharina again had to undergo an extremely detailed investigation. This time there were countless interviews and some in-depth studies of her past before she received permission to accompany her husband to the United States. Her difficulties were the result of having been deported from a country that was then controlled by the Russian Communists.

After they left Germany, Albert was stationed with the U.S. Army Military Police at Albuquerque, New Mexico. This was a top secret position and after one month the Army officials discovered that his wife, Katharina, wasn't a United States citizen. In fact, she had come from a Communist country and still had relatives who were living under a Communist regime. Albert was then transferred to a military police post with fewer security restrictions in El Paso, Texas. There he worked at the international bridge leading into Juarez, Mexico as a military police desk sergeant. Katharina and Albert lived during this period in low income, adobe-type quarters in the foothills of El Paso.

At the conclusion of eleven months of service in El Paso, Albert decided to leave the U.S. Army and return to civilian life. It was at this time that they set up housekeeping in Guilford, Connecticut, where Albert had spent his younger years.

Their first child, a girl, Renee, was born in 1962 after six years of marriage. Before this, Katharina had had several unsuccessful pregnancies, which she attributed to poor wartime medical attention that happened when she had a ruptured appendix that wasn't properly treated. Less than two years later, in January, 1964, Katharina and Albert had a second child, another daughter named Suzanne.

The family of four was able to return to Germany in October, 1964 to visit Katharina's parents. It was fortunate that they took this trip at that time, because early in 1965 Katharina's father, Franz, died of lung cancer. He had been weak-

ened by bad treatment and head injuries received at the hands of the Russians when they occupied his country.

Soon after Franz's death, and after many immigration and naturalization difficulties due to her birthplace had been overcome, Katharina's mother came to the United States. She settled in Guilford with Katharina and Albert, and her two granddaughters. Mrs. Wendler would live six months out of each year in Connecticut, and the other half of the year in Germany, her second homeland, and the burial place of her husband. While she was in Germany in 1972, Mrs. Wendler had a heart attack and passed away, fulfilling her wish that she die in Germany to be with her husband.

A third daughter was born to the Beauvais family in 1967 and given the name, Katharina-Marie. These were the first names of the maternal grandparents on both sides of the family. Katharina has been able to go back to Germany for visits on several occasions, but her deepest wish is to be able to return to her birthplace in Hungary for a visit. Hopefully, she will be able to see Budaörs again in the near future.

FRED OLSEN
ROOTS FROM NORWAY AND ENGLAND IN GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT

by Timothy Mack

Fred Olsen was born on February 28, 1891, at Newcastle on Tyne, England. His father, also Fred Olsen, had been born in Norway on January 18, 1865. His mother, Elizabeth Young, came into this world in England on January 17, 1865; and because she was a day older, Fred's father used to say that she knew more about everything.

Fred's grandfather was a schoolteacher and postmaster, so his father was determined to see that he got the best education, especially since Fred was an only child. He was registered in a small school, called a private school, when he was seven years of age. He remained in that school until he was fifteen. He liked the work there and was at the top of his class.

Sports were another great interest of Fred's and during his last two years in school he was the captain of the cricket and football teams. He still recalls vividly his last two weeks of school. He won, in a sort of local olympics, the 100-yard dash, the 220, and the long jump with a twenty-two-foot, six-inch leap. These were exciting triumphs for a fifteen-year-old boy.

Fred also was a choirboy for five years at the Church of England in his town. He went to church twice every Sunday, and his family also regularly attended. His childhood and homelife, according to Fred, were as normal as you can get. His family were not wealthy, because his father worked for a book publisher. People in the book publishing business didn't make much money, although they worked long, hard hours. Although they weren't rich, Fred could count on an annual two-week trip to northern England because his parents thought that it was important for him to have a chance to see more of the world. He traveled by horse and buggy through the rolling hill country. It was beautiful, with undeveloped woodlands, pretty mountains and sparkling rivers.

Wanting to retire early, Fred's father hoped to obtain some land such as he had previously owned in Norway. A friend advised him to leave England and move to Canada where good land was then selling for fifty cents an acre. So Fred Olsen, Sr. went to Canada in the spring of 1906. Young Fred and his mother were soon receiving letters enthusiastically describing Canada as a beautiful country. The family members who had stayed in England were urged to join their husband and father just as soon as Fred's school was out for the summer, which they did. They traveled over to the New World on a ship that was pleasant, but by no means exciting. Being summer, the weather was good, but weeks of doing nothing on shipboard produced boredom, and they couldn't wait to be reunited with Fred's father and see the new land.

After they docked in Quebec, they still had to take a thousand-mile trip into the interior to New (Northern) Ontario, where Fred's father had settled. There, the three Olsens went into the woods and built a log cabin. Soon they were living in a

space of about ten by sixteen feet. Fred, being young and strong, got a job that winter working in a lumber camp. For three seasons, he worked in these Ontario lumber camps, chopping down and cutting up trees.

This new life wasn't completely pleasant because many of his fellow lumbermen were French-Canadians who hated the sight of the English. Fred believed that they were always picking on him. Everything that he did was wrong in their opinion, and he began to hate his French-Canadian boss. They never physically beat him up, but he did receive many tongue lashings.

During the summer months Fred worked in the mines where gold had just been discovered. This job was more pleasant due to the fact that all of the people around him were English-speaking Canadians from the West who treated him well. The mining work was very hard, though, and Fred got paid thirty dollars a month for laboring seven days a week. His daily stint was from seven o'clock in the morning until after dark. At that time a dollar a day was regarded as standard pay and you were considered lucky to have the job.

After three years of this kind of life, Fred decided that he was sick of being the low man in his work groups, instead of being a leader as he had been at school. He figured that he could use his family's teaching background and stress on education in order to obtain a better life. So in the summer of 1909 he went to a new school that was being opened in the town of Brunther for an interview as a prospective teacher. Fred was hired on the spot and began teaching immediately. He found the work of teaching exciting and liked all of the children in his classroom. Especially one of his students, a girl named Florence Quittenton, went on to achieve a very high score on her college admission test.

Fred taught for three years, from 1909 to 1912. Then he decided to try to earn one of the five Latin scholarships that were available for studying at the University of Toronto. Out of the three thousand people who applied that year, Fred came in tenth and was not awarded a scholarship. He had come in first in chemistry, however, and this success made him eligible to receive a chemistry scholarship that enabled him to study at the university free. Although he really didn't like chemistry, he went through four years in this department being first in that course of study. He then stayed on at Toronto for an extra year in order to get his master's degree, which he was awarded in 1917. It was at this point that his mother had brought his former student, Florence Quittenton, to Toronto so that she could continue her education there. Fred liked Florence a lot and got along well with her.

In 1914 the world had gone to war, so this was a time when chemists had to stay available for service to their government. Fred was sent to an explosives plant in Quebec where, after working there a month, he was assigned to the position of assistant head chemist. Then the head chemist was transferred to another plant and within a few months Fred found himself the head of the entire laboratory. He had started out getting 125 dollars a month, but his salary doubled after he became head of the laboratory.

After a few weeks on the job, Fred called home and asked to speak to Florence. He asked her to come to Quebec to marry him. She did, and they formed a good combination. They are still married today, over sixty-five years later.

Fred Olsen at age forty.

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Fred and Florence Olsen today with a great-grandchild.

The chemical laboratory where Fred was working, however, failed to make enough money to continue operating. Its superintendent, with whom Fred was on friendly terms, was going to the United States and wanted Fred to accompany him. They went to the Aetna Explosives Company in Pennsylvania, where Fred was made assistant chief. Fred's salary again doubled, and he and Florence could now afford to have a nice apartment and more luxuries. They recognized that they were living in a country different from Canada, though, because many things were done differently in the United States than they had gotten used to previously.

Strangely enough, the same sequence of events happened in Pennsylvania as had occurred in Quebec. The chief chemist left the plant and Fred was promoted to become chief with another salary increase. He stayed with this plant until the end of the war, in 1918. The U.S. military ordnance department frequently came to check up on the laboratory, and their representatives had many talks with the chief chemist. Fred became acquainted with Colonel John Herbert Hunter this way, and went along when the Colonel was called to Washington. Being an assistant to Colonel Hunter, Fred had access to many secrets at the War Department, which he faithfully kept. Although he wasn't a citizen of the United States, he was trusted by the War Department authorities because they had confidence in Colonel Hunter.

In 1920 Colonel Hunter took Fred as his personal assistant to the Picatinny Arsenal, the head laboratory of the Ordnance Department. This facility is located in New Jersey. A short while later, Fred found himself in charge of the laboratory. This was a position that he held for about ten years. During this period when he was at Picatinny, Fred began his career as an inventor. In all, fifty-six new patents were credited to him, a few of which represent important discoveries. These inventions include the most recent ball powder process, a development in cellulose, and film processing.

Fred became a consultant to the vice-president of the Western Cartridge Company in 1929. He was later made technical director of this firm, and then in 1943 when this company became part of Olin Industries, he became the Director of Research and Development in the new organization. Fred retired from Olin in 1956, after twenty-five years of service. He believed that he was well liked and generously treated at Olin Industries, which is why he elected to stay on there until he was sixty-six years of age, instead of retiring at sixty-five.

It was in 1956 that Fred and his wife, Florence, moved to the Old Quarry in Guilford, Connecticut. The Old Quarry used to be a granite quarry, and is now a residential area along the shore of long Island Sound. The people who live there all pay separate taxes to their own residential organization, as well as to the Town of Guilford. Old Quarry, then, is almost like a separate community. An interesting rule in Old Quarry was that in order to buy land there, you had to agree to build a modern house. The home that Fred and Florence built was so modern that some people called it the "crazy house." it is located on a hill at the end of a quarry. The main part of the house is on one level, with a hall containing artifacts that Fred has collected and his office on the bottom floor. The Olsens have a salt-water pool that is covered over during the winter so that they can swim in it all year. Their guest house (pictured) is rented out during the summer months. The Olsens still live in their "crazy house" today.

The Olsen guest house, pool and rock garden in Old Quarry, Guilford, Connecticut.

During the twenty-three years that he has been retired, Fred has become interested in archeology and anthropology. He has published two books on topics related to these fields, and a third is about to come out. His first and second book were titled, *Indian Creek* and *On the Trail of the Arawaks*. The third volume will continue his narrative concerning the Arawak Indians. He is so interested in this subject that Fred has helped to form an organization in Antigua, a self-governing, former British colony in the West Indies, called the Antigua Archeological Society. People join the society and pay dues so that there is money to sponsor archeological digs. The pottery and other artifacts that are recovered are placed in a museum. Fred is still the treasurer of this organization.

Another one of Fred's hobbies is collecting paintings. An interesting story involves a Jackson Pollock painting that he bought for a few thousand dollars. Although Fred sold the painting for about $35,000, the next buyer was able to sell it to the Australian Government for two million dollars!

Fred's mother died in 1916 at the age of fifty. His father lived to be ninety years of age when he passed on in 1955. Fred and Florence are the parents of two children, Liz and Fred. Liz also has two children, Kit and Robin; while Fred, Jr. is the father of two girls and two boys. Robin is married to a man who may be the greatest authority on DNA in the country. Although all of the Olsen grandchildren are scientifically inclined, only two so far are actively pursuing careers in this field. Kit, however, is also artistically minded, and has produced many sculptures.

At the present time, Fred is eighty-eight years old, happily married, and enjoying studying archeology. He likes to reflect on his experiences as an immigrant to Canada from England, and then his migration as a young man to the United States. Life, he believes, has been good to him. "It is a pleasant way to live," says Fred. He also adds, "Anyone can do it by finding something that you like and working at it." He also feels that it is the job of a corporation to prosper and create new jobs. Therefore, in his view the oil companies that are prospering today are not bad for doing so.

THE ITALIAN-AMERICANS OF WATERBURY, CONNECTICUT

by Robert P. Nave

There once was an old folk belief that all of the streets in the United States were paved with gold. This notion has had a lot to do with people from other countries coming to America as immigrants. Even today, many people in foreign lands still believe this idea. About eighty years ago there were thousands of people who thought this way and acted on their belief. Among them were many Italians.

I would like to show you some statistics of Italian immigration to America during the thirty-year period that began in 1876.

> *The number of immigrants to the United States increased gradually in 30 years (1876-1905). In 1881 we find it at 11,842; 10 years later it had quadrupled (47,952 in 1890, 44,359 in 1891), falling to a little more than 30,000 in 1894. But it soon increased again, and in a few years was over 100,000, and with a jump in 1901 to 1902 it rose from 121,139 to 193,772; the following year it increased to 197,855. It was 168,789 in 1904, and almost doubled in 1905, with 316,797 immigrants.*[1]

In all, between 1901 and 1910 over two million Italian immigrants reached the United States. From 1911 to 1920 the total Italian influx to our shores was 1,109,524. Between 1921 and 1930 it was 455,315. There was then a great decline during the era of the Mussolini regime; only 68,028 between 1931 and 1940, and 57,661 between 1941 and 1950. After 1950, however, Italian immigration to the United States again expanded and 185,491 came from that country between 1951 and 1960, and 214,111 between 1961 and 1970.[2] This flow of humanity to America from Italy has now continued for over a century, bringing here altogether over five million Italian immigrants.

No one can really give a single basic reason why all of these Italians came to the United States. For some, undoubtedly their motivation was "America Fever." Economic conditions were certainly often a factor, and some people came here for political reasons or to avoid military conscription. Word of mouth evidently played a large part in the immigration of one's relatives and friends, because once one member of a family had come to America, the rest of the family usually followed.

When most of these immigrants first came to the United States, they landed in the port of New York. Waterbury, Connecticut is only ninety miles from Manhattan, so it was well located to receive many people from Italy. During the early decades of the twentieth century Waterbury was just becoming one of the world's largest manufacturers of brass. The Scovill Manufacturing Company and Anaconda Brass Company were both located in Waterbury. There were plenty of factory jobs for all of the immigrants who came to Waterbury.[3]

Today in Waterbury fifty-five percent of the population is of Italian extraction. The Irish background population is the next largest ethnic community, closely followed by Polish-Americans. It wasn't this way in the 1920's. At that time, approximately sixty years ago, the Irish outnumbered the Italians in Waterbury. The town, as well as most other American cities during that era, was segregated. There was a section of the city where the Italians predominated, in what is now Waterbury's North End. There was another area where most of the people

were Irish. In those days the Irish had a strong political grip on the city. But if you will go back about a century in Waterbury history, before the Irish gained control, you will see how the people chose their parties.

There were many examples of large-scale political corruption in the country in the 1860's, 1870's and 1880's. There were groups of people in Waterbury who formed alliances and were called political machines. They would get the new immigrants food, housing and jobs in exchange for their votes as soon as they had been naturalized. This was basically how many of the first immigrants chose their political party.

As the Italian immigrant's families came over and settled in Waterbury, they would register their party affiliation the same as their relatives who were already here and previously registered. When these groups of newly settled people started to become active in the city's politics, there were fierce struggles in Waterbury between the Irish and Italian politicians. Both the Irish and the Italian ethnic communities have had a strong sense of unity. But for many years the Irish almost always won elections because they had a plurality of voters.

There has been an almost two-to-one margin of Irish background mayors over Italian background since 1930. But still, the race in Waterbury was often close. In the mid-1930s Mayor Hayes, an Irishman, was arrested. As a result the deputy mayor at the time, Mr. Periello, an Italian, became the new mayor. The present mayor of Waterbury is Irish, and before him the city had an Italian mayor.

Over the years, though, Waterbury politics have changed drastically. Today most of the people, regardless of their race, color or creed, try to vote for the best candidate regardless of ethnic factors. However, as I stated earlier, about fifty-five percent of the current population of Waterbury is Italian. Of that number (about 66,000) I learned through an interview with the local Registrar of Voters that only about 20,000 are registered voters. That statistic is a rough estimate, but it still tells a story. Not everyone who could vote is registered. I also learned through my interview that ninety percent of the present members of the City Council are Italian.

There are several Italian-American Clubs in Waterbury, which seems to indicate that there is still considerable unity among citizens of Italian extraction. There is one organization that has a special political role, however. It is the Italian-American Democratic Club. This organization forms a large part of the clout that Italians have in local city government. The club normally endorses Italian-American candidates, but lately the Italian community of Waterbury has been having difficulty uniting behind a candidate of Italian heritage. The club has therefore endorsed several people from other ethnic backgrounds. The Italian voters who are registered in Waterbury, however, are just about half Republican and half Democrat.

In conclusion, the Italian-Americans play a very important role in the government of our city because they represent a majority of Waterbury citizens. I am happy to say that today we can focus our attention on the real issues in an election rather than being primarily concerned with the ethnic backgrounds of the candidates. I am proud to realize that we, the Italian-Americans, have several cultural organizations commemorating our heritage, and yet still participate in government

with a proper attitude. Unlike the outlook of many people sixty or more years ago, I don't think that most of us today care so much where a person is from, but rather focus on what kind of a leader that individual is. I am proud to say that I am an American citizen whose ancestors were from Italy, and that I share in the Italian Heritage.

Notes

[1] "Italian Emigration" in *the Encylopedia Americana*, Volume 15. (New York: Americana Corporation, 1949) p. 548.

[2] *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Volume 27. (New York: Americana Corporation, 1977) p. 525.

[3] Weibust, Patricia S., Gennaro Capobianco and Sally I. Gould, *The Italians: In Their Homeland, In America, In Connecticut*. (Storrs: World Education Project, The University of Connecticut, 1976) pp. 60 f.